

THE REUNITING OF FAMILIES

This is an important activity of the Central Tracing Agency. The ICRC has in fact continued without a break the action which it has undertaken for several years, whose purpose it is to reunite or to contribute towards reuniting members of families dispersed by the second world conflict or as a result of the events which subsequently followed in Europe.

It is worth recalling in this connection that in 1960 more than 15,000 persons, adults and children, were able to rejoin close relatives who had left their countries of residence. This figure brings to more than 388,000 the number of persons, for the most part of German stock ("Volksdeutsche") who have thus been returned to their families.

The study of requests which the ICRC receives from the families concerned is dealt with by the " Reuniting of families " section of the Central Tracing Agency.

This section makes a very careful examination of all such requests. It collects from those making the enquiries the necessary information for completing the file and makes certain that the persons who are asked to rejoin their relatives belong to categories which come under the scope of this action, namely :

- Transfer of minors to their parents (the age limit being generally fixed at 18 years) ;
- Reuniting of married couples to the place at which one of the two resides who provides for the maintenance of the family ;
- Transfer of aged or ill persons to members of their families who can take care of them.

As regards each of these categories, it is in addition essential that the family established abroad has obtained an entry visa for the person concerned.

After having collected the necessary details, the "Reuniting of families" section forwards the file which has just been compiled

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to the National Red Cross Society of the country in which the person resides, whose transfer is sought, requesting that Society to support representations made personally by the person concerned to his authorities with the object of obtaining an exit visa.

If it is a question of a disabled person or a child, the National Society of the country of residence makes arrangements for the journey, in co-operation with the Red Cross Societies of the countries of transit and of destination.

Most of the cases which are at present being dealt with concern "Volksdeutsche" established in Central and Eastern Europe. The ICRC, however, finds that it has also to facilitate the repatriation of nationals of the Eastern countries who have emigrated to Western Europe or overseas, wishing to return to their country of origin.

It should be emphasized that the efforts accomplished by the International Committee to give families which have been dispersed the joy of recreating their family circle, is based on the ever more active and effective support of National Societies wishing to co-operate in this profoundly humanitarian action.
